

Grounded by Goddis ordinaunce,
Hool, withoute discordaunce;
With hem holding comtee
Of al her goode in charitee,
That ther be noon excepcioun
Thurgh chaunging of entencioun;
That ech helpe other at hir neede,
And wysly hele bothe word and dede;
Trewes of mening, devoid of slouth,
for wit is nought withoute trouthe;
So that the ton dar al his thought
Seyn to his freend, and spare nought,
As to himsilf, without dreading
To be discovered by wreying,
for glad is that conjuncion,
Whan ther is noon suspicioun
Ne lak in hem, whom they wolde prove
That trew and parfit weren in love.
for no man may be amiable,
But if he be so ferme and stable,
That fortune chaunge him not, ne blinde,
But that his freend alwey him finde,
Bothe pore and riche, in oon estate.
for if his freend, thurgh any gate,
Wol compleyne of his povertie,
He shulde not byde so long, til he
Of his helping him requere;
for good deed, done but thurgh prayere,
Is sold, and bought to dere ywis,
To hert that of gret valour is.
for hert fulfilled of gentillesse
Can yvel demene his distresse.
And man that worthy is of name
To asken often hath gret shame.
GOOD man brenneth in his thought
for shame, whan he axeth ought.
He hath gret thought, and dredith ay
for his disese, whan he shal pray
his freend, lest that he warned be,
Til that he preve his stabiltee.
But whan that he hath founden oon
That trusty is and trew as stone,
And hath assayed him at al,
And found him stedefast as a wal,
And of his freendship be certeyne,
He shal him shewe bothe joye and peyne,
And al that he dar thinke or sey,
Withoute shame, as he wel may.
for how shulde he ashamed be
Of sich oon as I tolde thee?
for whan he woot his secree thought,
The thridd shal knowe therof right nought;
for tweyn in nombre is bet than three
In every counsel and secree.
Repreve he dredeth never a del,
Who that biset his wordis wel;
for every wys man, out of drede,
Can kepe his tunge til he see nede;
And foolles can not holde hir tunge;
A foolles belle is sone runge.

IC shal a trewe freend do more
To helpe his felowe of his sore,
And socoure him, whan he hath nede,

In al that he may doon in dede;
And gladder be that he him plesith
Than is his felowe that he esith.
And if he do not his requeste,
He shal as mochel him moleste
As his felow, for that he
May not fulfille his voluntee
As fully as he hath requered.
If bothe the hertis Love hath fered,
Joy and wo they shul depart,
And take evenly ech his part.
Half his anoy he shal have ay,
And comfort him what that he may;
And of his blisse parte shal he,
If love wol departed be.
And whilom of this amitee
Spak Tullius in a ditee:
MAN shulde maken his request
Unto his freend, that is honest;
And he goodly shulde it fulfille,
But if the more were out of skile,
And otherwise not graunt therto,
Except only in cases two:
If men his freend to deth wolde dryve,
Lat him be bisy to save his lyve.
Also if men wolen him assaile,
Of his wurship to make him faile,
And hindren him of his renoun,
Lat him, with ful entencioun,
His dever doon in ech degre
That his freend ne shamed be
In this two cases with his might,
Taking no kepe to skile nor right,
As ferre as love may him excuse.
This oughte no man to refuse.
This love that I have told to thee
Is nothing contrarie to me;
This wol I that thou folowe wel,
And leve the tother everydel.
This love to vertu al attendith,
The tothir foolles blent and shendith.
ANOTHER love also there is,
That is contrarie unto this,
Which desyre is so constreyned
That it is but wille feyned;
Awey fro trouthe it doth so varie,
That to good love it is contrarie;
for it maymeth, in many wyse,
Syke hertis with coveityse;
Al in winning and in profyt
Sich love settith his delyt.
This love so hangeth in balaunce
That, if it lese his hope, perchaunce,
Of lucre, that he is set upon,
It wol faile, and quenche anon;
for no man may be amorous,
Ne in his living vertuous,
But if he love more, in mood,
Men for hemsilf than for hir good.
for love that profit doth abyde
Is fals, and bit not in no tyde.
This love cometh of dame fortune,
That litel whyle wol contune;

for it shal chaungen wonder sone,
And take eclips right as the mone,
Whan she is from us ylet
Thurgh erthe, that bitwixe is set
The sonne and hir, as it may falle,
Be it in party, or in alle;
The shadowe maketh her bemis merke,
And hir hornes to shewe derke,
That part where she hath lost hir lyght
Of Phebus fully, and the sight;
Til whan the shadowe is overpast,
She is enlumined ageyn as faste,
Thurgh brightnesse of the sonne bemes
That yeveth to hir ageyn hir lemes.
That love is right of sich nature;
Now is it fair, and now obscure,
Now bright, now clippy of manere,
And whylom dim, and whylom clere.
As sone as Povertie ginneth take,
With mantel and with wedis blake
It hidith of Love the light away,
That into night it turneth day;
It may not see Richesse shyne
Til the blakke shadowes fyne.
for, whan Richesse shyneth bright,
Love recovereth ageyn his light;
And whan it faillith, he wol flit,
And as she groweth, so groweth it.
If this love, here what I sey:
The riche men are loved ay,
And namely tho that sparand bene,
That wol not wasse hir hertes clene
Of the filthe, nor of the vyce
Of gredy brenning avaryce.
The riche man ful fond is, ywis,
That weneth that he loved is.
If that his herte it undirstood,
It is not he, it is his good;
He may wel witen in his thought,
His good is loved, and he right nought.
for if he be a nigard eke,
Men wole not sette by him a leke,
But haten him; this is the soth.
Lo, what profit his catel doth!
Of every man that may him see,
It geteth him nought but enmittee.
But he amende him of that vyce,
And knowe himsilf, he is not wys.
ERTIS, he shulde ay frendly be,
To gete him love also ben free,
Or ellis he is not wyse ne sage
No more than is a gote ramage.
That he not loveth, his dede proveth,
Whan he his richesse so wel loveth,
That he wol hyde it ay and spare,
His pore freendis seen forfare;
To kepe it ay is his purpose,
Til for drede his eyen close,
And til a wikked deth him take;
Him hadde lever asondre shake,
And late his limes asondre ryve,
Than leve his richesse in his lyve.
He thenkith parte it with no man;

Certayn, no love is in him than.
How shulde love within him be,
Whan in his herte is no pite?
That he trespasseth, wel I wat,
for ech man knowith his estat;
for wel him oughte be reproved
That loveth nought, ne is not loved.
AT sith we am to fortune comen,
And han our sermoun of hir nomen,
A wondir wil I telle thee now,
Thou herdist never sich oon, I trow.
I not wher thou me leven shal,
Though sothfastnesse it be in al,
As it is writen, and is sooth,
That unto men more profit doth
The froward fortune and contraire,
Than the swote and debonaire;
And if thee thinke it is doutable,
It is thurgh argument provable.
for the debonaire and softe
falsith and bigylith ofte;
for liche a moder she can cherishe
And milken as doth a norys;
And of hir goode to hem deles,
And yeveth hem part of her joweles,
With grete richesse and dignitee;
And hem she hoteth stabiltee
In a state that is not stable,
But chaunging ay and variable;
And fedith hem with glorie veyne,
And worldly blisse noncerteyne.
Whan she hem settith on hir whele,
Than wene they to be right wele,
And in so stable state withalle,
That never they wene for to falle.
And whan they set so highe be,
They wene to have in certainte
Of hertly frendis so gret noumbre,
That nothing mighte her stat encombre;
They truste hem so on every syde,
Wening with hem they wolde abyde
In every perel and mischaunce,
Withoute chaunge or variaunce,
Bothe of catel and of good;
And also for to spende hir blood
And alle hir membris for to spille,
Only to fulfille hir wille.
They maken it hole in many wyse,
And hoten hem hir ful servyse,
How sore that it do hem smerte,
Into hir very naked sherte!
Herte and al, so hole they yeve,
for the tyme that they may live,
So that, with her flaterye,
They maken foolis glorifye
Of hir wordis greet speking,
And han thereof a rejoysing,
And trowe hem as the Evangyle;
And it is al falsheed and gyle,
As they shal afterwarde see,
Whan they arn falle in povertie,
And been of good and catel bare;
Than shulde they seen who freendis ware.